

*“If you don’t know where you’re going, you probably will end up somewhere else.”*

*-- Laurence J. Peter*

*“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”*

*-- Eleanor Roosevelt*

Before you can take a trip, you first need to determine your destination. Once that is determined, you can then get directions on how to get there. Without either – your destination or directions – you are simply lost.

The City of Covington is asking its residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to help determine the city’s ultimate destination as a community and to help create the “road map” that will get the city to that destination through a community visioning process. The city, in conjunction with the Center for Great Neighborhoods of Covington and the Covington Business Council, is conducting a community visioning and strategic planning process to accomplish these goals.

What exactly is community visioning? It is a process by which a community envisions the future it wants and then plans on how to achieve it. A key to the success of this process is that the goals and the action plans are firmly rooted in the goals and values of the local community.

The process also places a great deal of emphasis on public participation, not only at the beginning stages, but throughout the entire planning process. This way, the citizens are telling government, not the other way around, the type of community in which they want to live and work.

The primary objective of the Covington visioning process is to generate ideas that will lead to the creation of a community-driven strategic plan. This plan will establish clear goals for the city’s future and develop strategies to accomplish these goals. The strategic plan also will guide service delivery and resource allocation priorities in the city.

The strategic plan and the goals established will also provide a measure of accountability by allowing the city and the community as a whole to track how successful the community is in achieving the objectives established in the plan. In other words, it will create a “report card” that will catalogue our successes -- or failures -- as the case may be.

This process is designed to involve a large and diverse cross-section of people from our community – especially those who have never participated in such efforts in the past – to generate new ideas, new relationships, and a broad commitment to the ongoing work outlined in the strategic plan. Between June 14 and July 27, eight community engagement events were held throughout the city reach out and introduce residents and stakeholders to the planning process.

The process kicks into high gear this Saturday at the Drees Pavilion at Devou Park when we will hold the first of three community-wide retreats. At this retreat, which will be held from 9 a.m. to noon, we will brainstorm ideas about the community that we hope to be. Citizens will be asked to answer three primary questions: What would success look like in Covington? How would we make it happen? What are the obstacles to making it happen?

On September 23, a second retreat at the Drees Pavilion will prioritize the ideas developed at the first retreat and outline what roles citizens, government, non-profits, and businesses can play in achieving these goals. People will be asked to choose a topic they would like to work on and these groups will then meet on a regular basis to brainstorm specific projects that will achieve the goals set by the community.

At a third retreat, each group will share their projects and get feedback on how they might be prioritized. From the ideas and brainstorming that is done at these retreats and in the individual work groups, the city and its partners will create a strategic plan for the city.

If you live or work in Covington or have an interest in the city, please help us determine our future destination -- and create the road map that will get us there -- by attending the retreat this Saturday at the Drees Pavilion and other retreats scheduled for later this year.

*John Jay Fossett is the City Manager for the City of Covington. For more information about the community visioning and strategic planning process, please visit [www.covingtonky.com/index.asp?page=strategic\\_plan](http://www.covingtonky.com/index.asp?page=strategic_plan) or call 491-2220, ext. 31.*